

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-10 AID-05 /080 W

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R 241115Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2054

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NIAMEY 4187

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, NG

SUBJECT: FURTHER POLITICAL ARRESTS

1. POLITICAL TEMPERATURE HAS RISEN A DEGREE THIS WEEK WITH ANNOUNCEMENT ARREST OF GROUP OF SAWABA PARTY SUPPORTERS OCTOBER 20. ALL ROADS OUT OF NIAMEY WERE BLOCKED NIGHTS OF OCTOBER 20-22 DURING ROUND UP OF SOME 18 SUSPECTS. THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN REPORTS THAT CLANDESTINE ANTI-GOVERNMENT TRACTS ARE CIRCULATING IN NIAMEY, MAILED FROM PARIS.

2. NAMES OF THOSE ARRESTED HAVE NOT BEEN CITED BY GON BUT AMONG GROUP ARE AHMED GARBA, RECENTC PN ED SECRETARY GENERAL OF UNTN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, AND ELHADJ GABRIEL, FORMER MAYOR FINAMEY AND LONG-TIME SAWABA MEMBER. PRESS AND RADIO HAVE BEEN CARRYING EDITORIALS EXTOLLING SMC'S GREAT PATIENCE SO FAR WITH FORMER POLITICAL ACTIVISTS, AND STRESSING REGIME'S EFFORTS TO GET ALL ELEMENTS BEHIND MILITARY GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES. OFFICIALLY
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INSPIRED EDITORIALS NOTE THAT SMC HAD INTENTIONALLY

REFRAINED FROM CONDUCTING MORE EXTENSIVE WITCH HUNT AT TIME OF ARREST OF SANI SIDO AND DJIBO BAKARY IN EARLY AUGUST. NOW MORE IN SORROW THAN IN ANGER, GOVERNMENT SAYS POLITICAL EFFORTS OF SAWABA BACKERS HAVE CONTINUED WITH ATTEMPT TO CAPTURE UNTN, INFILTRATE SAMARIAS AND PENETRATE ARMED FORCES. NOTING CONTINUING ATTACKS FROM "LEFTIST JOURNALISTS" RESIDING ABROAD, GOVERNMENT SAYS THAT SITUATION COULD NO LONGER BE TOLERATED FOLLOWING DISCOVERY OF SECRET MEETING OF SAWABA SUPPORTERS WHICH TOOK PLACE IN DOWNTOWN NIAMEY EVENING OF OCTOBER 20.

3. COMMENT: LATEST ARRESTS ARE LESS SENSATIONAL THAN THOSE AUGUST 2 WHICH INCLUDED PROMINENT FIGURES LIKE SANI SIDO AND DJIBO BAKARY, BUT THEY INVOLVE LARGER NUMBERS AND MAY BE JUST AS SIGNIFICANT IN LONG RUN. PUBLIC ATTENTION HAS AGAIN BEEN DRAWN TO ATTEMPTS TO INFILTRATE MILITARY. IN ADDITION, GARBA, THOUGH NOT A FRONT LINE FIGURE, HAS IMPRESSIVE POPULARITY WITH THE LABOR MOVEMENT. LONG UNDER A CLOUD BECAUSE OF HIS TIES WITH SAWABA, GARBA WAS UNSEATED FROM UNTN LEADERSHIP VIA THINLY DISGUISED MANEUVER ARRANGED BY GOVERNMENT IN SEPTEMBER. NOTWITHSTANDING GOVERNMENT'S OBVIOUS INTEREST IN REPLACING HIM, GARBA BARELY MISSED RE-ELECTION ON OPEN BALLOT IN COURSE OF RAUCOUS AND UNRULY 4-DAY SPECIAL UNTN SESSION OCTOBER 9-12. LATEST EFFORT TO NEUTRALIZE GARBA UNDERLINES KOUNTCHE'S DETERMINATION AND ARMY'S MONOLY OF POWER, BUT ALSO SUGGESTS THAT ARMY MAY NOT BE TOTALLY IMMUNE TO BLANDISHMENTS OF POLITICIANS AND THAT MILITARY RULE FACES LATENT OPPOSITION FROM FARILY BROAD SPECNMS OF UNION RANK AND FILE. DAVISON

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